



EVERY DAY IN EVERY WAY

USDA's Cultural Transformation Action Items

- LEADERSHIP
- RECRUITMENT & RETENTION
- TALENT MANAGEMENT
- EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT
- CUSTOMER FOCUS & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

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MyUSDA

A Progress Report for Employees on USDA's Cultural Transformation

Volume 5, Issue 9

August 2015

Feds Feed Families 2015 Goes Through Oct 2!



Through the amazing generosity of federal employees since 2009, the food drive has collected **nearly 39 million pounds of food** for those in need. Last year alone, more than **14.8 million pounds** were donated and provided to food banks and pantries. All Federal agencies participate in this program. The field agencies share the collections with the local food banks ensuring that the Feds Feed Families (FFF) campaign will stretch across America and be visible and active in every state.

Employees are asked to bring non-perishable food items and place them into a designated collection box located in the Federal workplace or take them directly to a local food bank. Donations of fresh food (fruit, vegetables, herbs, and nuts) can be made directly to a food pantry in your community.

Employees are encouraged to take advantage of gleaning (clearing fields of unused produce). Field employees can reach out to the Society of St. Andrew for gleaning opportunities in their area.

Thank you for the work that you do to help your neighbors. We look forward to another exciting and successful FFF campaign! Share your progress, stories and photos on social media using the hashtag #FedsFeedFamilies.

Follow us on Twitter [@TKOHUNGER](#) or like us on [Facebook](#) for the latest updates from this season's campaign. [Jennifer McDowell](#), 2015 Feds Feeds Family National Program Manager, 202-260-9085.

Thanks to Jennifer McDowell & the [Feds Feed Families](#) website for the photo and article.

USDA Telework Assessment Survey

By Yetzenia Correa, Office of Human Resources Management

The USDA recently completed a Telework Assessment Survey to collect your feedback on how we can improve the Telework Program. This survey enabled us to capture the Top Strengths, Top Challenges, and Recommendations for next steps.

Nearly 15% of USDA employees across the country responded to the survey. Questions were geared toward non-Teleworkers and Teleworkers in both supervisory and non-supervisory positions.

Information was gathered regarding eligibility, participation, communication tools, opportunities, and supervisors' viewpoint.

USDA has made great strides in improving the Telework Program as identified by the Top Strengths in the Survey:

- 1) Telework participation and frequency is high. Approximately 55% of all eligible employees are participating in either Core or Ad-Hoc Telework;
- 2) Communication is not diminished by Telework. Employees surveyed use basic tools to communicate frequently with office staff and supervisors, and;
- 3) Managers use best practices to promote Telework including one-on-one discussions regarding Telework Agreements, feedback and work plans.

However, we recognize that we can continue to make progress in certain areas. The top challenges identified were;



- 1) Lack of effective technology. Not all employees have the appropriate tools for successful Telework including quality laptops with cameras and speakers, reliable security equipment like VPN and Citrix and communication software such as Vidyo, Adobe Connect and/or Lync;
- 2) Although training has been a priority for Telework at USDA with six additional Telework training modules added to the AgLearn portal, both supervisors and non-supervisors agree that there could be more benefits to the telework program if additional training was provided, and;
- 3) Management's support and implementation of the Telework program could be improved. Employees believe more accountability is necessary for a successful program.

**You can contact MyUSDA by emailing
MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov,
and be sure to visit the**

[USDA Cultural Transformation Website.](#)

Forest Service Diversity & Inclusion Coalition for Empowerment (DICE)

By Amber Watson, US Forest Service

US Forest Service employees Kristin Merony, Amber Watson, and Michelle Tamez were complete strangers until they met on a road trip while attending training.

During the ride they discussed their mutual passion around topics of Diversity and Inclusion, and employee recruitment and retention.

They convened a discussion with colleagues across the Washington Office about the meaning of Diversity and Inclusion, and they talked about the challenges, the opportunities, and bold steps the agency might take.

Since that initial conversation in November of 2014, they have engaged over 200 employees in the Yates building.

Topics have expanded to include generational diversity with more to come.

As part of their empowerment model they recruited three individuals from each previous conversation to facilitate the next.

Those passionate individuals now form the Diversity and Inclusion Coalition for Empowerment (DICE).

This grassroots initiative encourages people to have an open and honest dialogue around topics that influence the work-place environment.

It also empowers employees to take personal actions to improve their experience and that of others as well as to innovate and lead change from where they are.

Coming attractions: A DICE Sharepoint site, toolkit for hosting conversations, expansion to virtual audiences, and a Forest Service IDEALab.



USDA Employees participate in the Generational Diversity roundtable discussion held on June 25, 2015 (one of four) with cross-agency and cross-generational representation

OPEDA Elects Mark Benedict Its New President

By Dana Manning, Organization of Professional Employees of the USDA

The Organization of Professional Employees of the USDA (OPEDA) has elected Mr. Mark Benedict to serve and represent the organi-

zation and the USDA employees for 2015–2018. Mark serves as a senior staff officer for the FSIS office of policy. As President he has stated his dedication to support the Secretary's Cultural Transformation and Diversity; Disability Goals; advocating for disability employment & retention; improved work/life balance; and, protecting the civil rights of all employees.



Mr. Benedict reaches out to employees stating, "We have a lot of work to do together as a team to keep OPEDA growing, viable, relevant, and moving forward. I encourage a strategic approach to planning, encouraging partnerships with other USDA and federal employee organizations to achieve shared success. I am very interested in your ideas and learning about what is important to you. So, please, get involved and make a difference – help OPEDA help and serve you! Contact us at OPEDA@dm.usda.gov and visit www.OPEDA.org for organization news.



The Organization of Professional Employees of the USDA and Susan Shockey brings you,

Protect Yourself from Identity Theft



Susan Shockey, USDA/NIFA Family & Consumer Economics National Program Leader will provide a session on "Identity Theft".



Join us September 3, 2015 in the South Building Cafeteria at 12:30. Dr. Shockey will help you know how to spot identify theft.

Visit www.OPEDA.org for more information

While identity theft can happen to anyone, there are some things you can do to reduce your risk. This program is being offered to help you be a protected USDA employee and a responsible consumer.

Those unable to attend can see Susan Shockey's presentation at www.opeda.org.

Students Gain Valuable Experience Through Internships

By Gail Hendricks, Natural Resources Conservation Service

As the old song goes, "Summertime, and the livin' is easy..." especially in Florida, where summers are

usually slow-paced. Not so for college intern DeAndrea Brooks, who spent the summer working as a soil conservationist at the Crestview, Florida, office of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service. DeAndrea, a former student at Georgia Southern and future student at the University of North Georgia, is from Lawrenceville, Georgia. She applied for the internship through the Pathways Student Intern program and began work as a soil conservationist on June 1, 2015.

NRCS in Florida has employed students for several years from many universities around the country. This year they had eight interns, including three returning for a second time to learn more about conserving our natural resources. The job includes time in the office doing paperwork and computer work— such as conservation planning, creating maps, assisting with contract development and managing of local contracts. DeAndrea also spent time in the field— learning about implementation of erosion control practices, longleaf pine planting practices, invasive species removal, and a host of other programs.



"There is nothing like getting out in the field for hands-on experience," DeAndrea said. DeAndrea was supervised by Darryl Williams (seated left) the local NRCS district conservationist. Williams, who has 34 years in with NRCS, has been an intern trainer many times in the past and knows they need a wide range of experiences to determine if NRCS is a good fit for them.

DeAndrea also spent a day in Gainesville, meeting state office employees, other interns and members of the NRCS Florida leadership team. Each summer intern was required to give a short presentation on their internship and what they had learned and would take away with them from their experiences. "DeAndrea will succeed because of the great attitude she has of always wanting to learn more," said Williams.

Developing the Department's Greatest Assets

USDA Coaching Program

Make 2015 Your Best Professional Year Ever!

Engage a USDA Internal Coach to:

- Improve communication skills
- Improve life/work balance
- Improve self-confidence
- Improve relationships

The coach-client relationship generates learning and clarity for forward action with a commitment to clear measurable outcomes.

Do you meet any of the requirements?

- Have an approved IDP
- Enrolled/Graduated in/from a Leader's Program
- Completed a 360® Assessment
- On-Boarding Supervisor, Manager, or SES
- Transitioning from Manager to Leader

Ready to make 2015 the best year ever? Meet any of the requirements?

Contact: virtualuniversity@dm.usda.gov

Save the Date!

Department-Wide Observance



U.S. Department of Agriculture

National Hispanic Heritage Month

*"Hispanic Americans: Energizing
Our Nation's Diversity"*

Thursday, September 17, 2015
Jefferson Auditorium - South Building
10:00 - 11:00 a.m.

USDA SPECIAL OBSERVANCES

*Employees receive one hour of diversity training for attending
USDA Special Observances.*

You can view recordings of recent [USDA Special Observances by visiting here.](#)

If you'd like to share your feedback about Cultural Transformation, telework, diversity, or any other aspect of work/life at USDA, send an email to: MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov or visit USDA's [Work/Life and Wellness](#) community website if you have access to [USDA Connections](#).



Catch Up On Recent Issues of MyUSDA!

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MyUSDA Staff

William P. Milton, Jr.—Editorial Director

Roberta Jeanquart—Deputy Editorial Director

Perry Stevens—Editor-in-Chief

Alyn Kiel, Jennifer Yezak, Lynne Short, Karlease Kelly, Debra Arnold, Edwin Cierpial, Jr., James Brent, Melanie Clemons—Editors

Key Contributors:

Zina Sutch, Jacqueline Padron, Yetzenia Correa, Tatjana Fernandez, Rod Mance, Ali Muhammad, Alison Levy, Michelle Jordan, Tina Hoellerer, Susan Siemietkowski, Amber Watson, Dana Manning, Gail Hendricks

If you have ideas for future articles, contact us at MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov

Submit Your Article to MyUSDA

The monthly deadline for submissions is the end of the first week of each month.

Guidance on Submissions to MyUSDA

Submissions to MyUSDA should indicate progress that you, your agency, or your mission area have achieved toward implementing some aspect of the Secretary's Cultural Transformation (CT) Initiative. The ideal submission includes photos or graphics along with a brief description of the event. The ideal word count for articles is 150-200. All submissions are subject to editing and Departmental review.

Submissions may be in the form of a traditional article with a byline, a first-person account, or any work-related activity, event, or observance demonstrating the Secretary's Cultural Transformation Action Items: Leadership; Recruitment & Retention; Talent Management; Employee Development; and, Customer Focus & Community Outreach.

Email submissions or further inquiries to MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov.